

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-15C, S/N 86-0173

NELLIS AFB, NEVADA

3 AUGUST 2000

On 3 August 2000, at 1032 Pacific Standard Time (PST), an F-15C, S/N 86-0173, crashed 10 miles northeast of Rachel, Nevada. The F-15C, assigned to the 493rd Fighter Squadron (FS), 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath, UK, was participating in a Green Flag training exercise. The mishap pilot, assigned to the 493rd FS, ejected safely and was not injured. No other individuals were involved in the mishap. The aircraft crashed and burned on land belonging to the Bureau of Land Management. There were no injuries to civilians and there was no damage to private property.

The mishap pilot was the acting F-15C eight-ship air-superiority mission commander on a mission commander upgrade sortie, escorting approximately 50 additional blue air fighters and support aircraft in opposition against nine F-16s, acting as Mig-29s. During the intercept with the F-16s, the mishap pilot entered a turning Basic Fighter Maneuver (BFM) engagement with a single adversary. The mishap aircraft departed controlled flight and entered a left-hand, flat spin. Unable to recover by the established minimum controlled bailout altitude of 12,000 above Mean Sea Level, the mishap pilot successfully ejected. The Mishap Pilot made every attempt to save the aircraft prior to ejecting in accordance with established Air Force procedure. The aircraft was destroyed upon impact with the desert floor.

The mishap pilot's aircraft was configured with two external wing fuel tanks. The mishap pilot failed to accomplish the required operational fuel balance checks on the external tanks over the course of the engagement. While attempting to defend his wingman during the engagement, he slowed below the minimum established airspeed of 300 knots and exceeded the maximum allowable 30 Cockpit Units Angle of Attack.

The Accident Investigation Board President found, by clear and convincing evidence, that the cause of the mishap was pilot error. In particular, the overly aggressive maneuvering of the mishap pilot, combined with a probable right-wing heavy fuel imbalance, led to an inevitable departure from controlled flight and subsequent entry into an unrecoverable spin.

Under 10 U.S.C. 2254(d), any opinion of the accident investigators as to the cause of, or the factors contributing to, the accident set forth in the accident investigation report may not be considered as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding arising from an aircraft accident, nor may such information be considered an admission of liability by the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statements.